

AND HOW ARE WE TODAY?

The glow in the sky fades before our eyes,
another night, another day,
another small piece of our lives gone
& you tell me the stars will be beautiful tonight.

Your smile because I sigh so deeply,
your bemusement because I shudder; it's
to shake the fear off me like a wet dog & you
stand there clucking like a saved, young nun
telling me it can't be all that bad.

& Now there go the birds, flocking south again,
another volley of biased arrows loosed
from God knows where, behind us,
'way over our heads. Can't you see them?
Is that all you have to say?
"It'll be a mild winter this year"?

What the hell's the matter with you anyway?
You come sprightly into my philosophy
like a student nurse through the door of a dying man,
without knocking, kindly words
emanating from your milky lips like aspirins
spilling all over my sickroom floor.

Do you know something that I don't?
Is there some shelf in the chamber, some
parentheses in the sentence, something
in the genes, the attitude that keeps
your sunsets stealing less from you
than mine from me?

I tell you the birds have just abandoned one more time
your sky as well as mine
& there's no little liturgy,
no "How are we today?"
can birdsong back that terrible flight,
can muffle the resonance of that deadly archery
going on day by day behind our backs.

-- Donald Schenker

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